



U.S. Department of State Career Transition Center

CTC NEWSLETTER

(Print Version)

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Happy Earth Day!

"What lies ahead of you and what lies behind you is nothing compared to what lies within you."

*Mohandas K. Gandhi,
Indian independence leader*

Know Thyself: An Easy Approach

by Douglas B. Richardson

(From the Wall Street Journal's CareerJournal.com and reprinted with their permission)

You aren't sure what to do with the rest of your life, don't like your job or don't seem to last long at any of your employers. It's likely some serious introspection, a.k.a. a self-assessment, may be in order.

If you're considering this route, you're in luck, because an array of standardized tests, books, courses, counselors and other tools can help you determine what you're most suited and motivated to do.

Good assessment instruments can provide lengthy summaries of your interests, values, per-



"Make it thy business to know thyself, which is the most difficult lesson in the world. Yet from this lesson thou will learn to avoid the frog's foolish ambition of swelling to rival the bigness of the ox."

- Miguel de Cervantes

sonal style, needs and even your reactions to stress. They can link your interests and aptitudes to employment categories or suggest your affinity for a certain kind of job.

At this level of detail, a self-assessment can distinguish fundamental from peripheral factors and whether certain characteristics are permanent

parts of your personality or just transient (for example, insecurity may be due to economic or terrorist scares and not innate). With an assessment, you'll also be able to discriminate between "must haves" and mere "wants."

But these fancy tests can be expensive or provide too much data. Virtually no one can remember or regurgitate the information some of them contain. For example, reading your personal 45-page Birkman Advanced Report may be interesting, even liberating, but it's also like drinking from a fire hose.

Keep It Fundamental

There's a simpler way to gain a surprising amount of insight about yourself. This involves answering basic questions designed to identify the core building blocks of your values, motivation, temperament and personal style. Your answers will help you identify factors that underpin the nuances and details that standardized instruments measure more thoroughly.

The goal of Self Assessment 101 isn't to make you "Keep It Simple, Stupid." Instead, it's to "Keep It Fundamental, Friend" - the KIFF instead of the KISS principle. Each question should help narrow your focus and rule out life or work areas that aren't likely to gratify or appeal to you. When answering, don't over-stereotype yourself. Avoid looking at the answers as an "either-or" choice when "both" may be more accurate. Where your preferences are clear, your focus becomes clear.

Five Questions

The following are the five most important questions to ask yourself when doing a simple self-assessment and what they're designed to determine and what your answers mean:

- KIFF No. 1 examines your fundamental orientation: "Am I fundamentally oriented most toward ideas, people, or things?"

Idea-oriented people spend a lot of time in their heads, seeking to understand logical concepts, objective principles and abstract theories. Looking inward, they conceptualize, envision, create and theorize.

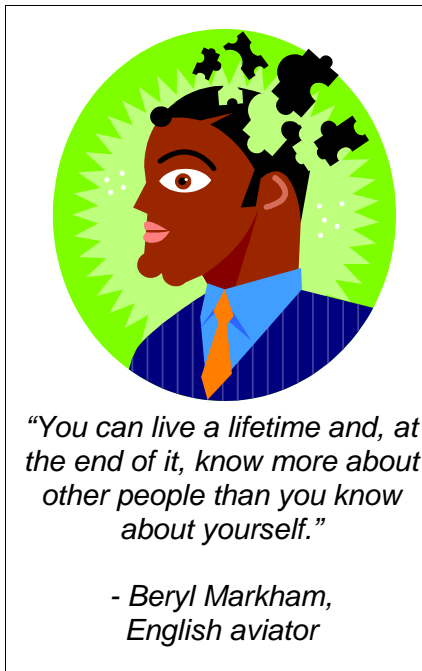
People-oriented people focus first on the satisfaction of human emotions, passions,

relationships and affiliations. Looking outward, they interact with other people, touching, feeling and honoring the emotional capacities that make us human. The primary driving force for them is being around other people and having their individual humanity appreciated. They also are drawn to aesthetic activities -- music, art, dance, bungee jumping, and so forth.

Thing-oriented people prefer to operate in the practical, tangible world of the present. The "things" they

like best may be numbers, in which case they're labeled "quants." But things also can be objects, such as two-by-fours, traffic, trees, bits, bytes, bolts, barns or Buicks. These people are natural implementers and administrators. They implement other people's designs, run systems, organize activities and sweat the details. They tend to be conventional, rather than "inventional."

If any of these types are removed from their favored environment, they may function well, but it's unlikely they'll be happy. While orientations can overlap (e.g., artistic engineers or extroverted programmers), one is



"You can live a lifetime and, at the end of it, know more about other people than you know about yourself."

*- Beryl Markham,
English aviator*

usually dominant.

- KIFF No. 2 looks at whether you're most rewarded or satisfied by tasks or relationships: "Am I more fundamentally task- or relationship-oriented?"

Not surprisingly, "idea-oriented people" and "thing-oriented people" tend to gravitate toward activity that involves achieving results and completing tasks. For them a team means people with complementary skills working together to "get it done."

Relationship-oriented people, on the other hand, find rich rewards in human interaction and affiliation. Intimacy, emotional connection, human values and self-actualization are their highest priority. For them, a team is an affinity group, a cohort that derives satisfaction from being together and enjoying shared values. By answering this question, you'll know whether you care more about the means or the ends.

- KIFF No. 3 looks at how you prefer to structure your day-to-day existence: "Am I more stability- or novelty-oriented?"

Many of us have a strong drive for stability, security and certainty. We prefer the known to the unknown. We plan instead of invent as we go along. We like tradition. We seek to recognize risk and diminish the impact of change on our lives. Others are wired differently; their hot button is new experiences, knowledge and perspectives.

They initiate and embrace change, while knowing that it creates uncertainty and

"There is no paycheck that can equal the feeling of contentment that comes from being the person you are meant to be."

- Oprah Winfrey, U.S. talk show hostess and actress

stress. Put novelty-seekers in stability-oriented jobs or lifestyles, and they get bored. Put stability-seekers in constantly changing environments, and they get anxious. Either way, such discomfort can wreck a life or a career, making this a fundamental question.



- KIFF No. 3 is a follow-up: "Do I like to do anything the same way twice?"

Some people are naturally inclined to invent things. They want to conceptualize, envision, create or solve something, but only once. Ask them to do it again, and they become bored and impatient. Put another way, these folks are naturally project- instead of maintenance-oriented. They like work that has a beginning, middle and an end, and then to move on to another beginning. They gravitate naturally toward consulting, project-management or other nonrecurring tasks.

Maintenance-oriented people are happiest when they're responsible for supporting and maintaining existing organizations, functions and operations: "Hey, I didn't invent the system, I just run it."

- KIFF No. 4 focuses on your personal incentive structure. It can be asked in two ways:

-- "In terms of what motivates me, am I more of an 'I' or a 'we' person?"

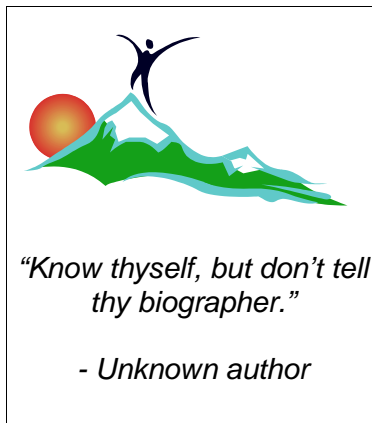
-- "Am I naturally more of an 'individual contributor' who likes to do things myself, or an 'interactor' who likes to lead, manage, collaborate or work alongside other people?"

Being an "I" person doesn't mean you're self-

ish or overly self-centered. It means that you are most satisfied by personal achievement and mastery and less satisfied by shared rewards or being part of a larger entity. Such people work well and find happiness in many kinds of organizations, but their whispered mantra will be, "This is a good place for me to do my thing."

"We" people also like to be recognized for their individual value and achievement, but they express themselves most happily within the context of greater values, such as shared achievement, cultural/aesthetic expression or human services (altruism is defined as "unselfish concern for or devotion to the welfare of others").

- KIFF No. 5 permeates all that you desire and do:
"What is your fundamental driving force? What's most important to you?"



mity needs, but a powerful drive for excitement and adventure: "I don't want to play it safe; I want to play often and big. Play is good. Just do it."

Given free choice, most people naturally will self-select into roles, relationships and careers that reflect and reinforce their KIFF characteristics. If you feel uncomfortable in your career, try to match what you've learned about your nature from the KIFF questions with a vocation.

This is easier said than done. Most people don't fit one category; we're rich amalgams of strengths, soft spots, aptitudes and motivations. But you have to start somewhere. If you "listen to the music" of your personal temperament, you'll hear a powerful backbeat and, hopefully, a clear melody line. In other words, you'll know the basics for a truly rich personal career and life symphony.

Here self-assessment experts and tools often detect four basic motivational types:

"Humanists" are driven primarily by a need for self-awareness, personal growth and the sense of individuality and uniqueness.

"Strategists" believe a sense of mastery and personal achievement is most important. They might say, "I am what I do." They are the world's design-build personalities. They feel insight is an essential first step, but what matters is getting the power to the road.

"Pragmatists" might say, "I most want a 'sense of place,' one anchored by power, influence, stability and control. I seek roles and settings that provide me with formal power, respect or prestige."

"Adventurers" have low status and confor-

Editor's Notes



For those who want to explore this topic further, here are some more resources.

Sandra Davis and Bill Handschin
Reinventing Yourself: Life Planning After 50

Rather than giving general advice on life-planning, career changing, and finding greater life satisfaction, *Reinventing Yourself* makes use of two scientifically based tools. The Strong Interest Inventory (Strong) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) are used to help the reader better understand themselves and make wiser decisions about work and relationships.

Margaret Riley Dikel

The Riley Guide has an excellent section on "Self-Assessment Resources" (www.rileyguide.com/assess.html) that offers articles explaining the "Types of Assessments," lists several "Popular Self-Directed Tools" as well as "Tools Requiring Interpretive Assistance," and "Other Tools & Resources to Try." (Note: I have found The Riley Guide to be a very helpful and reliable resource for all subjects pertaining to job searches.)

Charles R. Martin

Looking at Type and Careers

The book contains descriptions of the preferences of each of the 16 MBTI types and contains a section called "Careers Selected Most Often" for each type.

Paul Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger

Do What You Are

Discover the perfect career for you through the secrets of personality type. Through exercises, you determine your personality type and evaluate how you process information, make decisions, and interact with the world around you.

"If you have anything really valuable to contribute to the world it will come through the expression of your own personality, that single spark of divinity that sets you off and makes you different from every other living creature."

- Bruce Barton, U.S. author and advertising executive

Job Leads

We celebrate Earth Day in April, so we are dedicating this section to environmental careers this month.

Environmental Jobs & Careers - www.EcoEmploy.com

Environmental Career Opportunities – www.ecojobs.com/

Environmental Career Center – www.environmentalcareer.com

Green Dream Jobs: Business & Environmental Jobs with Sustainable Employers – www.sustainablebusiness.com/jobs/index.cfm

Naturalist Network – www.environetwork.com

Defender of Wildlife—www.defenders.org/employ.html

EarthJustice—www.earthjustice.org

National Wildlife Federation — www.nwf.org/careergateway/

National Parks Conservation Association—www.npca.org/jobs/

Sierra Club—www.sierraclub.org/jobs/

Wildlife Conservation Society—www.wcs.org/home/getinvolved/careers

World Wildlife Fund—www.worldwildlife.org/jobs/jobs.cfm



Attention JSP Graduates!

JSP Follow-up Group Meetings

You are invited to attend two JSP Follow-up Group Meetings in April. They will be held in Room E-2118 at FSI on April 13 and 27 from 1000 to 1200. Join us to network with others involved in job searches. The setting is very informal and there is no agenda.



CTC Job Fair

The CTC Job Fair last month was a big success with 30 companies represented and 170+ job seekers. The companies who were recruiting were:

Abt Associates, Inc.
Adecco Government Services
Alphainsight (formerly known as Alphatech)
Booz Allen Hamilton
Business Management Research Associates, Inc.
CACI
Carana Corporation
Chemonics International
Chugach Systems Integration, LLC
Federal Management Systems, Inc.
Geneva Software, Inc.
Global Professional Solutions, Inc.
Home Depot
Innovative Technology Application, Inc. (ITA)
International Resources Group (IRG)

John Snow, Inc.
Keane Federal
The Louis Berger Group
Management Systems International (MSI)
ManTech International Corporation
MILVETS Systems Technology, Inc.
Omniplex World Services Corporation
PADCO, Inc.
Peace Corps
Research Triangle Institute International
Resolvit Resources
Senior Employment Resources
STG, Inc.
United Nations & agencies (represented by DOS/IO)
Verizon
World Vision

The next CTC Job Fair will be held at FSI on August 24, 2004, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

*"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control.
These three alone lead life to sovereign
power."*

- Alfred, Lord Tennyson, English poet



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